

## **Asheville Transit Committee Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, 5 November 2013 – ver.3**

### **Attending:**

Committee Members: Dave Erb, Bruce Emory, Julie Mayfield, Tom Tomlin, Iti Ewart

City Staff: Mariate Echeverry, Yuri Koslen, Ken Putnam

Community Members: David Wilson, Adam Charnack, John Ridout, Nicole Alexander

### **3:37 pm - Opening of Meeting**

Julie opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Iti read the Announcement for Public Comment.

5 November 2013 Agenda - Julie requested more time for the discussion of new TC members.

1 October 2013 Minutes - Bruce moved, Tom second; Approved unanimously.

### **3:40 pm - Public Comment I**

David Wilson expressed continuing concerns with E1 being overly full, to the point where riders are turned away. He also has concerns with the stench emanating from the restrooms at the Transit Center. Tom reinforced the comments on restroom smell being extremely troubling. Mariate mentioned that there have been occasional problems with the sewage system itself.

### **3:42 pm - TC Experiences Riding the Bus**

Tom had good experiences on S1, and concerns with bus stop locations on C blocking traffic for extended periods. Iti relayed concerns about S4/N3 driver leaving early (and riders occasionally needing to take steps to prevent it) and then driving slow on the actual route. She also complimented driver Mike (Jones?) for his attention to riders' convenience. Yuri has received multiple complaints about S4, disciplinary process is proceeding. Julie rode E1, was frustrated with passengers' refusal to move back and make room, resulting in riders being left at the stop. Dave commented about reversed announcements on N1 and N2. Bruce had same concern with N1/N2 announcements. He also has observed those buses running quite late while he was walking on Merrimon.

### **3:52 pm – New Business** - none

### **3:52 pm – Old Business**

Sunday Service -

The Sunday service proposal discussed in October isn't back yet. MMC has requested the addition of suggested revenue sources and budget estimates; Staff is still analyzing these. Ken raised concerns that impending legislation might restrict transfers from Parking Fund into Transit. Bruce brought up the possibility of funds transfers relating to the marketing budget. Mariate expects Sunday service proposal back to TC by December meeting.

Open TC Seats -

TC members each listed their top five (of twelve) applicants. Each TC member then voted for four of the candidates who had received at least some interest. The names of all candidates receiving at least three votes in this second stage will be forwarded to the MMC for the final selection. The candidates to be considered by MMC are Steven Obremski (five votes), David Wilson (five), Ann Janzen (three), and Tristan Winkler (three).

Several TC members expressed their pleasure with the depth and strength of this year's candidate pool, and their hope that this is an indication of growing community recognition of public transit's value to the city. Iti commented that her votes were cast with a strong focus on increasing TC diversity. Yuri emphasized the on-

going importance of TC membership diversity for Title VI compliance, commenting that Asheville's largest minority groups are people of color, Hispanics, and Ukrainians. Bruce raised the question of increasing the size of the Committee, to take advantage of more of the expertise available to us. Mariate will check whether the number of TC members can increase. TC expressed preference for reinstating the requirement that TC members be City residents.

Public Meetings - Bruce and Julie went to tabling sessions at Battery Park Apartments and the Neighborhood Festival at UNC Asheville. Attendance was low, but useful information was provided to those attending.

MAHEC - MAHEC is interested in reopening talks about a joint venture with ART, partly due to a wheelchair accident on their sidewalk. The first meeting will be next week. Yuri mentioned the start of a project to put a shelter at a transfer point in Biltmore Village.

Publicity - Mariate has initiated conversations with City's new Communications person, who may be willing / able to put together a video on "Improving the Rider Experience." Iti feels it's essential that at least one non-elective rider be part of the video project team; Dave and others agree.

Meetings with Drivers - Mariate reported that the meetings with drivers have been going well.

Julie raised questions about new State funding mechanisms which appear to require joint ventures among multiple transit operators in order to get funding priority. Mariate and Ken indicated that this might be limited to capital expenditures. Mariate indicated that some informal arrangements are already in place with Henderson County (AVL, APC).

Multi-Modal Commission - Bruce reported on the most recent MMC meeting. There was major discussion about Greenways. Several amendments were proposed to add greenways and bike/ped lanes to the I-26 project. Ken also updated the MMC about the Charlotte Street study.

TMP Rollout Follow-Up Survey – Due in early November. The City is in communication with Just Economics about using their survey instrument. Once dates are known, Yuri will coordinate with TC members about helping disseminate the survey at the Transit Center and other locations.

#### **4:55 pm – Staff Updates**

Mariate discussed the status of projects on the list. Multi-Modal master planning should be underway soon; target is to have a plan for Council to adopt by March 2015. There is an effort to make bus stops ADA compliant as part of Riverside Drive development plan.

Yuri is working on tweaks to E1/E2 to improve timeliness and implement various driver suggestions. E1 will leave the ART Center on the hour and half hour, with E2 leaving 15 minutes after the hour. Changes are being made to C, W4, S4, S2, and N3 to improve service timing. Julie suggested taking advantage of the management transition at A-B Tech to improve transit. Yuri described sidewalk improvements and other facilities changes at A-B Tech which should smooth ART operations.

Ridership is showing a small increase over FY2013 (still below FY2012, but improving). Nicole Alexander indicated that N2 runs hot on a fairly frequent basis (S1 is even worse); Yuri says data support this view. Nicole and Iti have both experienced driver retaliation when they've been identified as the source of complaints; Mariate and Yuri encouraged not confronting the drivers directly, instead reporting problems through iride to allow staff to address problems in a way that preserves the anonymity of the person reporting the problem.

UNCA Passport participation is at multi-year high. MAHEC may be rejoining the program.

#### **5:15 pm – Public Comment Part II**

Nicole Alexander described an incident involving an armed man trying to board a bus. She requested an explicit posting that guns are prohibited on buses and ART property, to address NC laws which allow open carry in the absence of postings. She also requested that drivers be more attentive, and not force to wait outside in bad weather; some drivers are taking overly long breaks and occasionally leaving late as a result.

Adam Charnack introduced himself. He complimented the TMP-related changes and system branding efforts, and offered his assistance to the TC in the future.

**5:23 pm – Agenda Items for Next TC Meeting (? December 2013)**

Sunday service, goals update, survey, 2014 retreat / planning session, structural changes for flexibility / informality / expansion

**5:24 pm – Meeting Adjourned**